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PICTURES ON EXHIBITION.

GEO. INNESS. "THE SIGN OF PROMISE." SNEDECOR'S GALLERY.

This picture has been painted as a direct protest against the teachings of the naturalists, and is so declared by a printed description which is distributed at the place of Exhibition. Except for this description the painting would hardly be noticeable, but would pass as nothing more formidable to naturalism than is many another picture equally artificial in principle, and of far greater power. The sting of Shelley's "Queen Mab" lies in the notes thereof, and the critic naturally assails the notes as his most formidable antagonists. In like manner, the most needed criticism of Mr. Inness' Work can be written without seeing the picture, but with the printed pronouncement only. And the spectator ought to consider this before he judge the picture.

The statement of principle comes first. In all our extracts we shall print directly from the printed description, mistakes, italics, and all.

"The public taste in Art for some years past has been led to desire what is called the real in landscape, that is to say, the local and particular, and not the universal or the ideal. Such is unquestionably, at present, the prevailing tendency of American landscape painting. Mr. Inness, on the contrary, has long held the opinion that only the elements of the truly picturesque exist externally in any local scene, or in any aggregation of scenes, and that the highest beauty and truest value of the landscape painting are in the sentiment and feeling which flow from the mind and heart of the artist."

As regards these opinions of Mr. Inness we have, at present, nothing to say. If they need notice at all, they need a fuller discussion than there is room for, here. An artist's work is of more importance than his opinions, and may well be contrary to them, as has often been the case. We look to his *practice* for our edification.

After this, and a few words more about the picture, there comes a notice from the "Evening Post" of the original study for the picture, which, however, cannot be the same study which is exhibited near the picture, for in that there are no signs of the "pure azure" and "golden grain-fields" which the notice mentions. Of the exhibited study there is no oc-

casional to speak; for the picture has, of course, succeeded it, and made unnecessary its testimony to the doctrine which the artist wishes to teach.

The rest of the paper, being about half of it, is occupied by extracts from a notice of the picture, contributed to the Boston Transcript by James Jackson Jarves; we quote.

"Inness's example, therefore, is the more valuable, based as it is upon the higher principles of art. It develops the fact from the idea, giving the preference to subjective thought over the objective form of its fundamental *motive*. With him the inspiring idea is principal; form secondary, being the outgrowth of the idea. His picture illustrates phases of mind and feelings. He uses nature's forms simply as language to express thought. The opposite school of painters are content with clever imitation. This calls for no loftier tribute than admiration of scientific knowledge or dexterous manipulation. As appeals to the soul these works are lifeless. Being of things that perish in the using, they can never become a 'joy forever.'"

Developes the fact from the idea! But whence comes the idea? From the fact? If not from some fact, whence can it come? Are there any ideas not derived from fact? Are we never to stop laughing at the German painter in the story, who, while his French and English rivals went respectively to the menagerie and the desert, "developed *his* camel from the depths of his inner consciousness?" Here he is again, aided and abetted by Mr. Jarves, developing facts of nature from ideas, while the rest of the world is busy developing ideas from facts.

But what school of painters is that which "are content with clever imitation?" The school most "opposite" to Mr. Inness' work and Mr. Jarves' teachings, and which, of all others, Mr. Jarves most denounces, is that of the English naturalists, once called Pre-Raphaelites, and of their few school-fellows here. Let us assure Mr. Jarves that they were never "content" with anything they ever did, never limited their aspirations to anything short of universal achievement, and, as for "clever imitation," that they disclaim and abhor all attempts at imitation, as their great apostle has repeatedly declared.

As to things that appeal to the soul and things which are a joy forever, there seems to be some disagreement

between Keats and Mr. Jarves, and we prefer to err with Keats.

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever,
Its loveliness increases, it will never
Pass into nothingness."

But Mr. Jarves tells us that things which perish in the using do not so. Does he mean that they cannot be things of beauty? Does he really mean that no form of nature can appeal to the soul?

"The 'Sign of Promise' reveals the aspirations and sentiments of the artist. It is a visible confession of his theory, faith and aims. Outwardly, a beautiful composition of mingled stream, meadow, field, hillside and forest, with its rich associations of harvest and human labor, overcast by storm, through which gleams the rainbow, of hope; inwardly an eloquent symbol of a struggling soul. This double sense ranks it as inventive art, to be judged rather from that high aspect than from a merely material point of view.

But its excellence in this respect is also striking. It renders broadly and vividly the qualities of air, earth, vegetation and water. We feel their genuineness, because they do not catch the eyes as a dexterous imitation of form and substance, but as it were suggest nature."

Reveals? to whom? It is a very old comparison, that of a storm to a "struggling soul." But how is this picture more expressive of this "double sense" than is Cole's Storm, now in the Historical Society's Gallery, or Turner's "Wind, Rain and Speed," or any other picture of tempest? Is this "sentiment of the Artist" better expressed by work which carefully avoids "clever imitation," or even a distant resemblance to natural forms? It seems to be Mr. Jarves' assumption that bad painting and drawing are better expressions of thought than good.

There is very great danger that the shrewd spectator will suspect the "theory" to be that work should not be too faithful, because such would be too arduous; the "faith" to be in the ignorance and gullibility of the public;—and the "aims" to be the making the painter's life as easy and careless as possible.

Then it seems that it is because of this "double sense" that the picture ranks as inventive art. But is all symbolic art, all metaphorical art, to be so classed? Even when the symbol or metaphor is of venerable antiquity and in constant use? The penny-a-liner who calls fire "the devouring element" is just as much an inventive artist as Mr. Inness in getting up his brilliant comparison of storms without with storms within.

Moreover, much of the worst art that the world has seen, has been very full of double meaning, especially that wretched seventeenth and eighteenth century work, the characters of which were not men and women nor angels, nor animals, but personified virtues and vices, and genii of all sorts. Is this all ranked by Mr. Jarves as "inventive art," and judged by him "from that high aspect," whatever those words may mean?

But we are told that the success of this picture in a material point of view is also striking. The consideration of this is our next business. Let us remark in passing that "suggestion," we are told, is more like the "genuine" qualities of air, earth and water than "imitation." Indeed!

Whatever a landscape picture is intended for, it must certainly be intended to give some of the beauty, or, at least, some of the meaning of nature. It is surely impossible to conceive of any painting which is not meant to give some idea of the character of the things it represents. It seems fair to compare all pictures of nature with nature herself, for they all pretend to reproduce either the forms or the "soul" of nature.

In the case of this picture, whatever there is good in it, is the occasional resemblance of its painted to the real natural forms. There is a mountain on the right whose slope from the plain will remind the spectator of mountain sides he has seen, and thus will give him a moment's pleasure. There are clouds resting on this slope, near the top, which will remind him of the steaming columns of vapor he has seen climbing the slopes of Franconia and Catskill after a storm. Such pleasure as he can thus get from the picture we do not wish to deny him.

But this pleasure is soon exhausted, as the eye grows familiar with the picture, and the thought asks, "Why painted? What is meant?" Mr. Jarves says that the painter "uses nature's forms simply to express thought." But what if they are not nature's forms? Is there any success in the attempt we have supposed to tell the world *something* of nature? Is this ragged tree in the foreground capable of telling any truths or expressing any

thoughts about trees or human souls? Of course the artist does not wish to give any truths about any particular oak (it appears to be an oak,) nor about any particular species of oak, nor, perhaps, about the oak genus at all; but he must have intended to give us some "general truths" of tree nature. Has he done so? In those straggling and contorted limbs? In that ragged and formless green membrane which clings about them? No, the search is in vain for anything more suggestive of trees than greenness and ramification. The tree drawing is disgracefully bad; is it on that account better fitted to represent the artist's thought? Perhaps it is this tree that represents the "struggling soul" above spoken of. But a real tree tossed by the wind, "caught and cuffed by the gale," is vastly more impressive and expressive than this. Why not then have tried to draw one from the "local facts" somewhere?

Or, what means that dark, mottled belt beyond another belt of dark lead-color? Can this be water, and that a distant forest? It must be so, as they resemble those facts of nature more than others, yet, what is there in them of the "universal and ideal" of water and of woods? Really the public ought to be told if this strange, marbly surface, like dark soap, is better in a picture than what the artist saw when he looked at a distant forest.

Why is the sky made darker than much of the earth? In nature it is the brightest thing except the sun. Is this "rendering broadly and vividly the qualities of air?" Indeed, attempted imitation, bad as it is, is better than such suggestion (*suggestio falsi*) as this.

The gauntlet is thrown down before Church in this clumsy sentence.

"The one school, of which Inness is as much a type as is Church of the other, *believes*; the other *sees*."

The fault that we find with Church is that he is not natural *enough*, misusing his great powers by frequent slightness of work and recklessness of aim. But if you want to see "natural forms" whether "used to express thought" or not, go to Church, not to Inness. Whatever you find of good in Church, come to Inness to see the opposite *evil*. Whatever shortcomings or

deficiency you find in Church, come to Inness to find it in its worst and most unbearable form.

But, as it is of the picture and not of Mr. Inness that we wish to speak here, it is right to say that we don't consider this the best he can do, but the *worst* he can do, even when led astray by false teaching and false dreams of greatness.

JAS. M. HART. "A SUMMER'S MEMORY OF BERKSHIRE." KNOEDLER'S GALLERY.

We cannot help being pleased with this picture, it is such a beautiful combination of color, and of sparkling lights and shadows. It is a great pleasure to come to it, after seeing the "Sign of Promise." In comparison with Mr. Inness' picture, the tendency of this is certainly to the real and true, as opposed to the conventional, in landscape painting. And yet it is not Nature, it comes very near the truth, but always stops a little short. Every part of it tempts us to look more carefully, and when we so look, disappoints us. We say to ourselves, surely this in the foreground is the truth of weeds and grasses; but, upon closer examination, we find that not a weed nor a single leaf is rightly drawn. It is finished suggestion. Now, we do not object to partial drawing of nature, if that which is given be rightly given; we do not object to suggestive work, if that which is suggested be the truth. In this picture there is a great deal of finish, but it is not "added fact," and therefore is false. It all goes to make the picture smooth, but tends to the completion of nothing.

Nature never looks so perfectly clean and pretty, even in her sunniest and brightest moods. She is always grander and more solemn, more real and solid, with more scars upon her face—the signs of growth and struggle—the shadows of years of storm and sunshine.

This is a studio picture, painted according to the rules of Art. That is, the largest masses, strongest light and best finish are in the centre, the hill-sides and trees in the middle distance are very soft and misty, gradually losing themselves in the sky, and dark shadow covers all the near foreground,

the white cow by the brookside in full sunshine giving a strong central light.

By the way, the brook itself, whose clear water ripples over the round, brown stones on its bottom, is the truest piece of painting in the picture.

Mr. Hart is a master of his materials, a very skillful workman; he shows a great deal of feeling for graceful form and pleasant combinations of color, and his work is much better than the pictures painted after the Art Rules by the French and English artists. We should have no particular objection to the rules, were they always backed by deep and subtle knowledge of the facts of nature. Otherwise they are a dead letter;—or rather a positive harm to those who believe that they can make artists. We know that nature often shows us a beautiful composition with the strongest light in the foreground, thus utterly violating the rules. Turner, the greatest of modern landscape painters, preferring nature to rules, has followed her in this also, and has put the strongest light in the foreground in some of his noblest compositions.

There is nothing strange in this picture. All is just as we might have expected, very pretty and very cleverly painted. There is nothing surprising or unaccountable,—except the fogginess of the distant trees, and the bright sunshine in the centre of the picture, and these effects result from the Rules of Art. Now, in all the scenes of nature, great or small, brilliant or gloomy, there are always spots of color, and bright lights or mysterious darks in places where we never should have looked for them; things that we cannot account for, and do not understand. So, if a picture be not in some respects surprising to us, asserting positively some things which we had never thought of and which we find it hard to believe, it can hardly be true to nature, and will certainly not be in any sense great.

If Mr. Hart would go out next summer with the determination to paint such a scene as this, just as it is in nature,—doing every tree, weed and cloud with all his might,—he would produce work that would surprise himself. And he would soon produce work that not only this present time but all future generations would be grateful for;—work that every year of enlarged knowledge and riper civilization would enhance in value. Now Mr. Hart is a pleasure to the world, then he would be a benefactor. Now he gives us a pleasing picture, then he would give us noble truths and lasting beauty.

We wish to call attention to the beautiful picture in the same gallery, "*La Guitarre*, by Willems, of Paris."* Of all the pictures sent us now-a-days from France, none are more admirable in execution, and few or none so simple and natural in feeling. The masterly painting of the accessories, furniture, piano cover and walls, is quite beyond praise; it is almost faultless, and worthy of study by all our painters.

When will our painters learn that they all need power of execution; that no delicacy of feeling, or depth of perception, or knowledge, or wit, is of its proper use without it; that *with* it, a painter can express all that is in him, and continually find there more to express? We are not especial admirers of the present French school, which lacks terribly in many things, but it can do our painters very great good if they will copy its power of drawing and painting, without its sentiment, except now and then.

* Since the above was written this picture has been sold to a well-known amateur of this city, and removed from the Gallery. We congratulate our readers that it is to remain in America.

THERE are several poems by D. G. Rossetti, the head of the English Pre-Raphaelites, very much loved by those who know them, but very little known in this country, although three of them were printed some years ago in "The Crayon." In compliance with numerous requests, we reprint, from the Crayon, one of the finest.

THE BLESSED DAMOSEL.

D. G. ROSSETTI.

THE Blessed Damosel leaned out
From the gold bar of heaven;
Her eyes knew more of rest and shade
Than waters stilled at even,
She held three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
And the hair lying down her back
Was yellow, like ripe corn.

Her seemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers,
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers,
Albeit to them she left the day
Had counted as ten years.

(To one it is ten years of years.
.... Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me,—her hair
Fell all about my face.
Nothing,—the autumn fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
That she was standing on,
By God built over the sheer depth
The which is space begun,
So high that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in heaven, across the flood
Of Æther, like a bridge;
Beneath, the tides of day and night
With flame and blackness ridge
The void, as low as where the earth
Spins, like a fretful midge.

She scarcely heard her sweet new friends
Playing at holy games,
Softly they spoke among themselves
Their virginal, chaste names,

And the souls, mounting up to God,
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed above the vast
Waste sea of worlds that swarm,
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of heaven, she saw
Time, like a pulse, shake fierce
Through all the worlds, her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path, and now she spoke, as when
The stars sung in their spheres.

The sun was gone now, the curved moon
Hung, like a little feather,
luttering far down the gulf, and now
She spoke through the still weather,
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had, when they sang together.

"I wish that he would come to me!
For he will come," she said.
"Have I not prayed in heaven? on earth
Lord! Lord! has he not prayed?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
And shall I feel afraid?"

"When 'round his head the aureole clings
And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light,
And we will step down as to a stream,
And bathe there, in God's sight.

"We two will stand beside that shrine
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
By prayers sent up to God,
And see our old prayers, granted, melt,
Each like a little cloud.

"We two will lie in the shadow of
The living, mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the dove
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that his plumes touch
Saith his name audibly.

"And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here, which his voice
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find new knowledge in each pause
Or some new thing to know."